

*February 24, 2010*

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Jerry McNerney (CA-11) yesterday questioned a senior Toyota executive appearing before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations on the pending closure of the New United Motor Manufacturing Inc. (NUMMI) auto manufacturing plant.

During his questioning of the President and Chief Operating Officer of Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Congressman McNerney expressed his deep concern that Toyota has not made a concerted effort to explore all options to keep the NUMMI plant open. He also took issue with Toyota's decision to stop operations in an area with a significant base of customers, especially during a time when the company's reputation is already in question.

In addition to his questions during the committee hearing, Congressman McNerney submitted a statement to the official record of the U.S. House of Representatives. An excerpt from that statement follows:

"I believe that closing the New United Motor Manufacturing, Inc (NUMMI) would be a mistake for Toyota and would be harmful for thousands of California families. I urge Toyota in the strongest terms to reconsider this decision because I am convinced that keeping NUMMI open would benefit the public and the company. As I recently wrote in a letter to Toyota's President, Mr. Akio Toyoda, Toyota can hardly afford the public opinion backlash that will result if the company is seen as abandoning thousands of loyal employees during this difficult economic time. The announced closure of NUMMI would result in the layoff of nearly 5,000 workers at the facility and as many as 35,000 people in California. This closure would have a devastating impact on NUMMI employees and supporting businesses throughout the state.

"I am pleased to have the opportunity to question Mr. Lentz about Toyota's efforts to maintain operations at NUMMI. General Motors announced that it would end its participation in NUMMI last summer, and it is my understanding that Toyota made the decision to discontinue manufacturing operations at NUMMI in August, only a short time later. I have serious doubts as to whether Toyota, during that brief period, made an earnest and complete effort to explore possibilities that would keep NUMMI open. I have written to Toyota, both personally and in conjunction with Congressional colleagues, to urge the company to reverse its poor decision. Unfortunately I have not yet received complete or satisfying answers to the concerns I have raised.

“Private corporations have the right to make independent decisions about their own business operations. However, I do not believe that closing NUMMI in the current economic climate would benefit Toyota’s future profitability. Toyota’s reputation for producing dependable cars is facing unprecedented challenges because of tragic, and fatal, safety failures that were not publicly acknowledged in a timely manner. Reversing the decision to close the NUMMI facility, thereby saving tens of thousands of jobs, would be a strong indication that Toyota is committed to rebuilding its image in California and the rest of the country. Toyota would be seen as a dependable partner with California during tough economic times.”